



Hidalgo County  
Family and Community Health

# 2017 YEAR IN REVIEW

## 204,730

Total Number of Persons Reached by Educational Programs in Health and Wellness, EFNEP, and Family Resources

## 87,541.36

Total Number of Educational Programming Hours Spent with Participants in Educational Programs

### HEALTH AND WELLNESS

## 290

Participants at the 3 Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking School events by Healthy South Texas



Multiple successful environmental changes and educational programs held as part of the Working on Wellness (WOW) grant

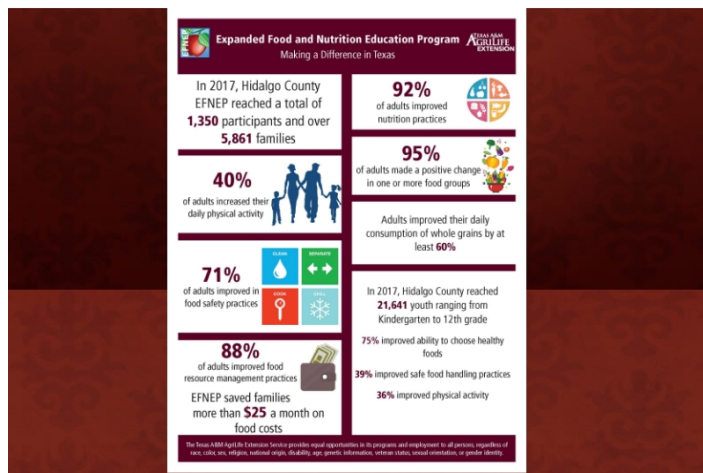


76% increase in Strengthening Families participant's confidence in their parenting skills

## 6.2 M → 7.2 M

Si Yo Puedo Participants Change in Diabetes Knowledge (out of ten)

### EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM (EFNEP)



### FAMILY RESOURCES

#### Strengthening Families & Financial Literacy



Family participants a 93% improvement in child behavior after using learned positive reinforcements



79% of Welcome to the Real World participants learned how to create a spending plan



169 persons graduated from the Strengthening Families program



Money Smart participants reported a 77% increase in paying their bills on time

Andrea Valdez, County Extension Agent  
Joanne Ureste, County Extension Agent  
Melissa De Leon, Extension Agent-EFNEP  
Esly Reyes, Extension Agent Assistant

Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service-  
Hidalgo County  
410 N. 13th Ave. Edinburg, Texas 78541  
956-383-1026  
<http://agrilife.hidalgo.org>



# 2018 Hidalgo County Horticulture Program

TEXAS A&M  
**AGRI**LIFE  
EXTENSION

## Master Garden Training Program

50 hour training program for new volunteers

- 6 new volunteers graduated in 2017
- 18 people participated in the 2017 training

## Jr. Master Gardener Training Program

- 26 educators were trained on the Learn, Grow, Eat, & Go! Curriculum
- 35 gardening presentations were delivered to over 360 Hidalgo Co. youth

## Small Acreage Workshop Series

- 189 participants were educated in Soil Management, Fruit Trees for the RGV, Fruit Tree Grafting, Goats & Poultry, Food Safety, and Business Planning.

## EarthKind Workshop Series

- Over 390 people were educated at 32 EarthKind workshops
- An average of 400 people were reached monthly at our Farmers Market Information Table
- Fall and Spring Garden Festivals were attended by over 200 people each

## Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities

- 9 Communities gardens are maintained throughout Hidalgo County
- 216 individuals participated
- 2,403 lbs. of produce harvested



**2017 Deep South Texas Master Gardener Graduates**

Pictured from L. to R. Ashley Gregory – CEA, Andrea Torres-Barragan, Virginia Morales, Sandy Brown, Ellen Trudeau, Fabian Trudeau, Grace Flores, Rick Leland – MG President

Below: Participants learn how to graft avocado trees.



Below: Participants making handicap accessible raised beds for the community garden.



Above: Carmen Elementary students planting seedlings in the garden.



Above: Participants learn how to build a raised bed for vegetable gardening



# 2017 Hidalgo County Agriculture and Natural Resources

Ashley Gregory, CEA – Horticulture; Brad Cowan, CEA – ANR; Vidal Saenz – CEP



## **Master Gardener & Jr. Master Gardener Training Programs**

50 hour training program for new volunteers

- 6 new volunteers graduated in 2017
- 18 people participated in the 2017 training
- 40 MGs volunteered 4,655 hours

26 educators were trained on the Learn, Grow, Eat, & Go! Curriculum

- 35 gardening presentations were delivered to over 360 Hidalgo Co. youth

## **Small Acreage Workshop Series**

- 189 participants were educated in Soil Management, Fruit Trees for the RGV, Fruit Tree Grafting, Goats & Poultry, Food Safety, and Business Planning.

## **EarthKind Workshop Series**

- Over 390 people educated at 32 workshops
- An average of 400 people reached monthly at Farmers Market Information Table
- Fall and Spring Garden Festivals were attended by over 200 people each
- ISA Arborsit Training Course – 21 participants

## **Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities**

- 9 Communities gardens are maintained throughout Hidalgo County
- 216 individuals participated
- 2,403 lbs. of produce harvested

## **Agriculture**

13 group methods resulted in 3145 contact hours of education. Educational events included the Cotton & Grain Pre-Plant Conference, a Corn Aflatoxin Meeting, grain sorghum and corn field days, a sugarcane seminar and a soybean meeting. Other tools utilized included: on-farm research demonstrations, publications, print & broadcast media and educational information posted to the web site.

A **Cotton & Grain Marketing Workshop** introduced concepts and tools available to producers that will enable them to minimize risk and sharpen marketing skills, proven to provide an economic return to farm operations. Evaluations from participants estimated an average anticipated benefit of \$50 per acre (21,500 acres in survey) for a total estimated economic benefit of \$1,075,000 for this program.

The economic impact of the **RGV Nutrient Management Education Program** estimated an average cost savings of \$25 per acre, for a potential savings of \$408,775 in 2017.

24 consignors entered 95 bulls in the **Bull Gain Test**. Last year's participants estimated an average benefit of \$500 per bull for a potential economic benefit of \$47,500.

**Pesticide Safety**- 684 persons attended 37 meetings resulting in 2215 hours of education on the safe use of crop protection chemicals.

## **RGV Beef 706 Program**

-Three programs done in collaboration with RGV County Extension Agents.  
-45 program participants

## **Goat and Poultry Workshop**

-43 program participants were trained on best management practices with goat and poultry production.

## **Fly Control Result Demonstrations**

-Five cow/calf herds were provided fly control with the Vet Gun in hopes of producers adopting new fly control methods.

## **Small Farm Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Program**

-Assisted 78 program participants in filling out USDA-Farm Service Agency loan applications for farm operating and farm ownership loans. The total amount requested was \$5,131,250.

# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

## Hidalgo County

# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

## EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

### *Supporting Texas Families with Greatest Need Since 1969*

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) helps young families and youth with limited resources—those most at risk to suffer from hunger, food insecurity and the inability to connect with available support systems. EFNEP offers practical lessons in basic nutrition, food preparation, food budget management and food safety in settings convenient for the participants. EFNEP also includes a walking program for adult participants. Program graduates reflect significant, lasting improvement in eating behaviors and healthy food habits.

Texas has a need for EFNEP—2014 data show that 20% of Texas families with children under the age of 18 were living below poverty level, compared to 18% of U.S. families.

### *EFNEP Reaches Diverse Audiences in Hidalgo County*

In Hidalgo County, ethnically diverse EFNEP nutrition assistants reach youth and adult groups whose principal language may be English or Spanish

In 2017,

- 1,350 families enrolled in EFNEP.
- 21,641 youth contacts were made through the EFNEP youth program.
- 79% of EFNEP participants had children under the age of 19.
- 79% of families were at or below 100% of federal poverty level.
- 89% of families enrolled in one or more food assistance programs at entry
- 100% of EFNEP adult participants were Hispanic/Latino.

### *Volunteers Strengthen EFNEP*

In 2017, 170 adult volunteers donated 1,269 hours of work to EFNEP in Hidalgo County. At the Texas rate of \$25.15/hr, this volunteerism has a minimum dollar value of \$31,915. Volunteers make a difference in their own communities, and contribute to EFNEP's continued success.

*In 2013, 39.5% of  
Hidalgo County youth  
lived in poverty.*



*EFNEP, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, provides food and nutrition education for limited resource families with young children through the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, with funding from USDA. In 2017, EFNEP programs assisted Texans in Bexar, Cameron, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, Hidalgo, Kleberg, Nueces, Tarrant, Travis and Willacy Counties.*

*EFNEP nutrition assistants help low-income families and youth acquire the knowledge, skills, and changed behaviors necessary for nutritionally sound diets and to contribute to their personal development and the improvement of total family diet and nutritional welfare. Hidalgo County EFNEP nutrition education assistants teach in homes, schools, churches and community agencies.*



### *Participant Testimonials:*

- *Learned to thaw meats correctly. One client said 'No wonder we often got stomach problems-I would leave chicken in the sink all day!'*
- *Learned about eating correct portion sizes. To their surprise they had enough to eat.*
- *Fifty percent had problems with constipation, but when they learned about fiber and started including high fiber foods in their meals and drinking plenty of water, the problem went away.*



*"...to assist families and youth with limited resources in making simple changes in eating behaviors so that over time, healthy choices become healthy habits."*

### *EFNEP Makes a Real Difference*

#### Adult Program:

Using "hands-on" experiences, EFNEP adult participants complete at least a six-lesson series on stretching food dollars, improving eating habits, and practicing food safety principles. As a result of participation in EFNEP the following food and nutrition behaviors were achieved:

- **95%** with positive change in any food group at program exit. Specifically, EFNEP participants consumed 0.5 more cups of fruits and vegetables at completion, compared to entry.
- **88%** improved in one or more food resource management practices such as planning meals in advance.
- **92%** improved in one or more nutrition practices such as using the "Nutrition Facts" food labels more to make food choices.
- **71%** improved in one or more food safety practices such as thawing foods safely.
- **40%** of program participants reported a positive change in physical activity.

#### Youth Program:

The EFNEP-Youth program is directed toward low-income youth ages 6-12. These students participate in a series of fun and educational lessons on good nutrition and food safety as part of after school activities and summer programs. The following results show how youth participants' food behaviors improved after attending EFNEP classes.

- **75%** improved ability to choose foods according to the Dietary Guidelines.
- **39%** improved their safe food handling practices more often.
- **36%** improved physical activity practices.

### *Cost-Benefit of EFNEP*

Studies have shown that for every \$1 spent on EFNEP, \$10 were estimated to be saved in health care costs and \$2 saved in food costs by participants. For Hidalgo County, this is \$2.9 million in estimated health care cost savings and almost \$595,610 in food costs.

**TEXAS AGRILIFE  
EXTENSION SERVICE**

Melissa De Leon  
Extension Agent  
Hidalgo County EFNEP  
122 East Van Week  
Edinburg, TX 78539

Phone: 956.383.6093

E-mail:

Melissa.DeLeon@ag.tamu.edu

Website: <http://efnep.tamu.edu/>

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating



## Cooperative Extension Program

### **The Small Farm Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Program In the Rio Grande Valley**

**Relevance-** Socially disadvantaged and limited-resource agricultural producers and rural youth face numerous challenges in obtaining financial resources through commercial lending institutions because of the risk involved in farming and ranching and the local banks unwillingness to lend during these times of economic uncertainty. Many of the local producers qualify for financing through USDA-Farm Service Agency, but are not aware of their programs. The Cooperative Extension Program provided outreach on USDA-Farm Service Agency's loan programs and offered support in financial planning and management to fill out the necessary paperwork correctly and remove all of the obstacles that impeded agricultural producers from applying for these loans.

**Response-** The purpose of our program is to enhance the business management and marketing skills of agricultural producers who utilize our services. Targeted clientele learned how to keep and improve production and financial records and generate personal and farm financial statements for their use in financial resource acquisition. We were able to address a wide range of activities such as livestock production, crop production, financial management, marketing and applying for assistance under USDA programs.

**Results-** In 2017, Seventy-eight program participants were able to submit complete, direct loan applications to USDA-Farm Service Agency. These loans were for farm operating, farm ownership, microloans and youth loans. Successful applicants were able to purchase livestock, farm equipment, land and some re-financed existing debt at a low interest rate. All of the obstacles that impeded their full participation in the Program were removed. They were able to save a 2% fee on their loan requests by not utilizing the services of a private loan consultant. The total money requested for 2017 amounted to \$5,131,250. This amount multiplied by 2%, totals \$102,625, which is the amount that an independent loan consultant would have charged. This was an average savings of \$1,315.70 for each of the seventy-eight participants.





**RGV Beef 706-** This was a series of three programs that were hosted in collaboration between the Starr, Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy, Brooks, Zapata and CEP Agents.

Session I- Held at RY Livestock Auction in Rio Grande City, Texas on March 25, 2017. Industry experts discussed the factors affecting feeder calves and program participants were set up into eight groups. Each group purchased a feeder steer through a mock auction process to monitor through the feedlot phase.

Session II- Held at Rio Beef Feedyard in Raymondville, Texas on September 28, 2017. During this session, producers received an inside look into a feedyard and viewed the cattle as finished steers.

Session III- Held at Texas A&M University-Kingsville on October 20-21, 2017. This 1.5 day session allowed producers to participate in a hands-on exercise that took their chosen steer from the auction purchase to the harvest, grading and fabrication process of the carcass.

Agents involved in the RGV Beef 706 Program received an award in Outstanding Program in Ag and Natural Resources-Beef 706 from the District 12 Extension Administrator.



**Mr. Leoncio Salinas-** Mr. Salinas was forced to sell his cattle due to previous droughts that he had endured in Starr County. The Cooperative Extension Program provided technical assistance in filling out a Microloan from USDA-Farm Service Agency and he was able to purchase cattle to restock his pastures with a low-interest farm operating loan. In visiting with Mr. Salinas, I noticed the good fly control strategies and mineral supplementation that keeps his herd looking healthy. He is a model rancher in our area.





**Goat and Poultry 101-** This Program was held at the Hoblitzelle Auditorium in Weslaco, Texas on May 18, 2017. Topics included: Best practices and procedures on goats, best practices and procedures on poultry, farm fresh eggs, and goat milk by-products.



**Food Safety Workshop-** This Program was held at the Hoblitzelle Auditorium in Weslaco, Texas on June 29, 2017. Topics included: Field food safety, food safety resources and a food safety certification workshop.





**Business Planning Workshop for Small Scale Ag Producers-** This Program was held at the Hoblitzelle Auditorium in Weslaco, Texas on August 31, 2017. Topics included: The importance of developing a business plan for loan acquisition, knowing the costs of production on your operation, TDA resources and tools, USDA-FSA Microloan programs and technical assistance from the Cooperative Extension Program at Prairie View A&M University.



**RGV Forage Field Day-** This Program was held in Cameron County at Valerius Farms on October 11, 2017. Topics included: Insect pests in pastures, weed management and fertility, hay equipment field demonstrations, pasture, range and forage crop insurance and financial programs available from USDA.





**Starr County Ranchers Roundup-** This Program was held at the San Isidro Catholic Church Parish Hall in Starr County on October 26, 2017. Topics included: Brush management, deer harvest management strategies, the future of wind energy and USDA-Farm Service Agency loan programs.